

Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 ORM-02 DHA-02 SCA-01 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2280
AMEMBASSY ROME
INFO INS WASHDC
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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ROME PASS INS

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: CVIS PINT EG
SUBJECT: ALLEGED "PERSECUTION" OF CHRISTIANS

REF: (A) CAIRO 4935 (B) BEIRUT 3331

1. UNTIL RECEIPT OF REFTEL (B), EMBASSY HAD NOT BEEN AWARE THAT THERE ARE CHRISTIAN COPTS APPLYING FOR AND APPARENTLY BEING GRANTED REFUGEE STATUS ON BASIS OF ALLEGED "PERSECUTION" IN EGYPT. A QUICK REVIEW OF CONSULAR FILES LEADS US TO IMPRESSION THAT NUMBER PROCESSED BY INS IN LAST MONTH ALONE MAY NUMBER ABOUT 60. FIRST INKLING THAT WE HAD THIS IS GOING ON CAME IN SPECIFIC APPLICATION FROM EGYPTIAN COPT FOR REFUGEE STATUS ON BASIS HE AND WIFE WERE "ESCAPPES" FROM RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN EGYPT (REF (A)).

2. IF WE ARE CORRECT IN OUR ASSUMPTION THAT SIZEABLE NUMBERS OF CHRISTIANS WITH EGYPTIAN PASSPORTS ARE CLAIMING TO BE REFUGEES, THEN WE SUSPECT SOMETHING IN WRONG. AS DEPARTMENT AND INS WELL AWARE, MANY EGYPTIANS WISH TO IMMIGRATE TO US AND, LIKE INTENDING IMMIGRANTS ALL OVER
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THE WORLD, RESENT OUR LENGTHY AND COMPLICATED IV PROCESS.

WE CANNOT AVOID SPECULATING THAT APPLICATIONS FOR CONDITIONAL ENTRY MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH INABILITY TO MEET PRESENT REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS AS INTENDING IMMIGRANTS, AND, PERHAPS TO A LESSER DEGREE, THE NORMAL WAITING TIME FOR PROCESSING OF A CASE IF REGISTRATION WAS POSSIBLE.

3. EMBASSY WISHES TO STRESS THAT EGYPTIAN CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES FREEDOM OF WORSHIP. INFLUENCE OF COPTIC COMMUNITY ON EGYPTIAN LIFE HAS TRADITIONALLY OUTWEIGHED ITS NUMBERS. UNLIKE LEBANESE, EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS LIVE MIXED TOGETHER IN CITIES AND VILLAGES AND ARE VIRTUALLY INDISTINGUISHABLE BY DRESS, MANNER OR ACCENT. THERE ARE COPTS IN THE CABINET AND IN THE HIGHEST POSITIONS IN THE PRESS AND BUSINESS COMMUNITIES.

4. COPTS CONSITUTE NO MORE THAN 1/6 OF TOTAL POPULATION AND WE DO NOT DOUBT THAT FROM TIME TO TIME THERE IS JOB DISCRIMINATION. THIS IS FAR CRY FROM RELGIOUS PERSECUTION. MOST RECENT RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE (IN 1972 AT KHANKA) WAS IMMEDIATELY DEALT WITH BY GOE WHICH CONTINUES TO BE HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO REMOTE POSSIBILITY OF RELIGIOUS FRICTION. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, FOREIGN MINISTER PERSONALLY HAD WORD WITH NEWSPAPER EDITORS DURING LEBANESE FIGHTING, CAUTIONING THEM NOT TO SHOW INFLAMMATORY PICTURES WHICH MIGHT FRIGHTEEN LOCAL CHRISTIANS. FONMIN HIMSELF ISSUED SEVERAL STATEMENTS INTENDED IN PART TO DOWNPLAY FOR DOMESTIC REPEAT DOMESTIC PURPOSES, INTERCONFESSIONAL NATURE OF LEBANESE DISPUTE.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE ROUGH ESTIMATE BY INS OF NUMBERS OF COPTS RECENTLY REQUESTING REFUGEE STATUS AND NUMBER OF THOSE WHOM INS HAS GRANTED CONDITIONAL ENTRY. WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT IN ANY SUCH CASE, APPLICANTS BE OBLIGATED TO DOCUMENT THEIR CLAIM OF PERSECUTION. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF A SINGLE CASE OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AGAINST COPTIC CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION READILY AVAILABLE ON THIS SUBJECT.

EILTS

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Message Attributes

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